



Success Snapshot for Media

Creating Skilled Solar Workers Through a Nationwide Training Network

One of the greatest needs identified in the Department of Energy's Solar America Cities program is to develop a qualified solar workforce throughout the U.S. Ushering in this new green workforce goes beyond the hot topic of "job creation"; it extends to the very real need to have ready a well-prepared workforce, equipped with the skills and knowledge to effectively support the solar market as it grows.

In Austin, Texas, those involved in the Solar America Cities program have worked extensively with Austin Community College to ensure the proper curriculum and materials are available to people wishing to get trained on solar PV and solar hot water installations. Similar efforts have also been underway in New Orleans under the Solar America Cities initiative. As an example, Louisiana Clean Tech, in partnership with the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, had trained over 200 students to install solar systems as of December 2009 – and those numbers continue to grow. According to Louisiana Clean Tech, this comprehensive solar energy workforce training has spawned the growth of the solar energy industry from two companies licensed to install solar systems in Louisiana - to over 65 by the close of 2009. Louisiana Clean Tech has also partnered with Ontility and six community colleges to train over 300 people in Texas, including people in the Solar America Cities of San Antonio and Houston. This is truly the Department of Energy's Solar America Cities vision in action. By spreading the knowledge across many municipalities, the Solar America Cities program is helping to ensure Americans are qualified to fill the "green jobs" of tomorrow.

While many Solar America Cities have initiated training programs working with their local universities, in July 2009 the Department of Energy took solar training initiatives one step further. With funding from the Solar America Cities program, representatives from Boston; Knoxville, Tenn.; Milwaukee; Minneapolis/St. Paul; Philadelphia; San Francisco; and San Jose and Santa Rosa, Calif., all came together for several days of "Train the Trainer" courses at the Florida Solar Energy Center in Cocoa, Fla. By the end of five days of training, the 17 individuals from eight markets were prepared to go back to their respective cities and begin the process of ushering in the new green workforce in their home towns, effectively seeding the country with qualified solar instructors and relevant solar curricula. Using the "Train the Trainer" approach, the Solar America Cities program is teaching people not only the latest in solar technologies – but also how to teach effective training courses. This approach is enabling some of the country's smartest solar thought leaders to develop solar curricula and programs to be deployed in their cities.

According to Kevin Lynn, an engineer with Sentech, who worked to arrange the training programs in Florida, "The need for qualified solar installers in this country is too great to rely on a 'one to one' training approach. We need to look at larger impact programs, such as the Department of Energy's 'Train the Trainer' approach. This allows us to move multiple cities toward a green workforce faster and more cost effectively."



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The results of the “Train the Trainer” approach were evident immediately following the Florida training event in July. Less than a month later, the San Jose-based Center for Employment Training took the new knowledge from Florida and trained an additional 28 trainers. Those trainers then descended upon institutions throughout California to begin training others. The result was, in a matter of weeks, 17 trainers grew to 45 trainers, and set the ripple effect in motion.

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Department of Energy has significantly stepped up solar installer training and formally launched a nationally-coordinated solar training network. In October 2009, the Department of Energy announced up to \$27 million over five years for a network of nine regional resource and training providers, all of them established providers with expert trainers, facilities and networks. These providers can now enable the rapid scale-up of local training programs by empowering community colleges and other local institutions with replicable training models and instructor support. The providers will offer “Train the Trainer” workshops as well as develop curricula, career pathways and regional labor market studies. Through this new national network of training centers, an estimated 1,400 instructors and 170,000 solar workers will be trained in the next six years.

For more information on the “Train the Trainer” approach and the nationwide network of instructors, please contact Jim Licko, GroundFloor Media, and he can connect you with the following individuals for interviews:

- Hannah Muller or Charlie Hemmeline, U.S. Department of Energy, Solar America Cities
- Mark Frickel, Sentech advisor to Solar America Cities
- Kevin Lynn, Sentech advisor to Solar America Cities
- Yana Rasulova, U.S. Department of Energy, Project Officer

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